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*also: The Military & The Environment
Housing Crisis
The NHS at 70*



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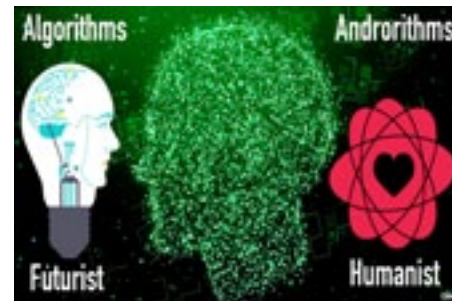
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Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up



capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

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Editorial

Trump: will trade follow?

THE SO-CALLED 'special relationship' between US and British capitalism seems at times to resemble, for those who are old enough to remember, the portrayal by the 1980s spitting image show of the relationship between David Steel and David Owen. The former would fawn over the latter, who would in return deliver a withering put down.

During the Northern Irish 'peace process' in the 1990s, John Major's government had to grin and bear it when President Bill Clinton courted Sinn Féin. When Tony Blair was prime minister, he backed President George Bush in the invasion of Iraq and accorded him a state visit. He didn't receive much in return other than a 'Yo Blair' greeting at a 2006 G8 Summit. Shortly after he assumed the Presidency, Barack Obama, returned the bust of Winston Churchill from the White House.

Not long after Donald Trump was inaugurated as President, Theresa May wasted no time in visiting him in Washington in January 2017. Despite the controversial nature of his presidency, May invited him to a state visit. His scheduled visit to the UK on 13 July will be a working visit and the Big Man will

meet the Queen. There promises to be large demonstrations against him when he arrives.

In the meantime, in November 2017, Theresa May earned a rebuke from President Trump when she criticised him for retweeting anti-Muslim videos by the far-right Britain First Group. In May, Trump ignored Boris Johnson's pleading and pulled out of the nuclear deal with Iran. Early in June Trump slapped tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from the EU, which also apply to the UK. Then there are the distressing scenes from the Texas border with Mexico where migrant children have been forcibly separated from their parents. In spite of all this, Theresa May will welcome Donald Trump on 13 July. As if to further ingratiate herself with Trump, May supported the US bombing of Syria in April.

This apparent toadying attitude originated after the Second War when the US emerged as a dominant global power and the British Empire was in decline. The British capitalist class, by and large, believed they could retain most of their former global influence by allying themselves to the United States, and it was hoped that this would give them

advantageous access to world markets. They also exploited their links to Europe, enticing US banks and corporations to base their European operations in the UK. However, as the UK is leaving the EU, there is the urgent need for a trade deal. No doubt this is one of the major reasons for the 13 July visit.

Theresa May's strategy of staying close to Donald Trump has not been entirely successful, for the latter has struck up a friendly relationship with the French President, Emmanuel Macron, who seeks to position French capitalism as the new link to Europe for US businesses, thus encouraging them to relocate from Britain to France.

This forthcoming visit could not illustrate more clearly the cynicism of capitalism. Capitalist leaders are compelled by the cutthroat nature of competing world markets to make alliances with regimes, however odious, if their economic interests demand it.



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UBIquity

A WORD of warning to those who hope science and scientists will come to the rescue and Save the Planet with some ingenious method that hasn't occurred to the rest of us. Two UCL academics, Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin, have put forward 'A manifesto to save Planet Earth (and ourselves)' with what they see as the answer to the Anthropocene crisis (BBC Online, 7 June - bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-44389413). Following the usual polemical tactic of 'scare the pants off us' followed by 'knock some sense into us' they propose a two-fold solution. The first of these, Half-Earth, involves reforestation and re-wilding half of the Earth for the benefit of its non-human species.

As a way to reverse environmental pollution and global warming the idea has some merit, although some re-wilders are surely going too far in suggesting the widespread reintroduction of wolves, particularly into Britain. 'Reforestation' though is often a greenwash term for the common practice of cutting down slow-growing hardwoods and replacing them with fast-growing pine and conifer softwood plantations, which is hardly a like-for-like replacement destined to do anything constructive about species habitat loss. Half-Earth may be good for the planet, as the authors argue, but in capitalism it is only likely to occur if it's also good for profits, and these two goods are not normally found in the same basket.

The other idea is the evergreen and ever-present notion of the Universal Basic Income (UBI), long-time darling of the Green Party and now floated by Corbyn and McDonnell's Labour Party, and tried out after a fashion in small pilots in Canada and Finland. This is the idea that there would be an unconditional basic income for every adult in society, regardless of whether they had a job, the aim being to decouple paid work from consumption and thereby break the soul-destroying cycle of getting and spending which is supposedly responsible for runaway consumerism, plastic continents, moral bankruptcy and everything else.

That UBI has a lot of support is hardly surprising. To those struggling to keep heads above water, it would be a lifeline or at least a polystyrene swim float, while to social progressives it would represent either a big step towards universal equity

(UBIquity?) or even, perhaps, a back-door exit into socialism along the dark and dank lower colon of money and class society.

The problem is, you don't need a weatherman to know it wouldn't work. UBI would have to come out of the tax on the profits of employers, but these profits are derived from the hard work of the workers, and the only thing forcing these workers to work hard in the first place is their relative poverty. Release them from that poverty, and the employer's profits accordingly collapse. Imagine if you won the lottery tomorrow. Would you go back to work? Would anyone? This is the central dilemma of the worker's condition in capitalism. We want more than anything to get rid of the misery and



Reforestation in Oregon, USA

stress. But that stress is the very thing holding capitalism together, and it can't afford for us to alleviate that stress or it starts to fall apart like a human pyramid injected with a muscle relaxant.

But this wouldn't really happen either, because workers would never be allowed to keep hold of this UBI windfall for long. What the employers would actually do is start cutting wages across the board, by roughly the amount of UBI. Perhaps they wouldn't do it immediately, but by incremental steps, by failing to raise wages along with the rising cost of living, until they'd erased the gain entirely. They'd do this because they'd know that you, the worker with the windfall, could afford it. And why not? Look at it from the boss's point of view. Would you pay £2 for a tin of beans when you knew you could get it for 50p? No you wouldn't. And a boss wouldn't pay over the odds for a worker either. In the end, the benefit of UBI would be cancelled out and nobody would be any the better off. The only way for us to beat the capitalist game is to stop playing it.

Dark Materials

Douglas Adams immortalised the idea of a depressed robot in *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and Radiohead subsequently sang about a Paranoid Android. Now a team at MIT has built an AI system that makes Marvin look as perky as a springtime Pollyanna (BBC Online, 2 June - bbc.co.uk/news/technology-44040008). They wanted to see what kinds of conclusions an AI would reach if it was only fed on the very worst information from all 'the dark corners of the net', so they fed it on an exclusive diet of murders, beheadings and gruesome accidents, while a control AI got a more balanced input of people and fluffy animals. When 'Norman' (named after Norman Bates in

the film *Psycho*) was shown Rorschach inkblots, it saw murder, death, suicide and gore galore, while its control partner saw birds and vases of flowers. Where happy Harry saw 'a person holding an umbrella', morbid Norman saw 'a man shot dead in front of his screaming wife'.

Yes, it's tempting to laugh, and why not? Any computational system is only as good as the information being fed into it, and lately there has been concern about the intrinsic bias in some of that information, including charges of 'machine racism'. As the

article goes on to point out, an AI trained on Google news, when asked to complete the statement: 'Man is to computer programmer as woman is to X', responded with 'homemaker'.

The very fact that scientists can depress a computer is a significant milestone on the road to utter nihilism, but it's our own mental health we should be worrying about. As we have previously observed in this column (August 2017), an overload of bad-news bias is bad for us too, making us less likely to see the potential for improving the world and more likely to give up in fatalistic resignation. Maybe that's why the capitalist press loves it so much. But we socialists at least ought to consider giving ourselves a more balanced diet, with a spoonful of optimism thrown in occasionally.

PJS

In the elections in Italy in March the collapse of the Democratic Party combined with the lack of confidence in Berlusconi's party (Forza Italia) paved the way for the 5-Star Movement

(M5S) and Lega Nord. Compared with 2013, M5S gained about 2 million votes, while the Democratic Party lost 4 million. Berlusconi's party also shrank by about 2 million. Lega with 17 percent of the votes (5.7 million), a little bit less than the Democratic Party, was the real winner of the elections.

M5S and Lega together represent only 35 percent of the registered voters, yet, according to the voting system in use, this is enough to rule. The problem is that these two populist currents were traditionally opposed to each other, and were not above exchanging cheap shots during the electoral campaign. Thus for many, given the outcome of this last election, the only way out would have been yet another general election in the late summer or autumn.

However, M5S and Lega have managed to agree on a political contract to form a government together. It is evident that many who voted M5S to protest against the Democratic Party right-leaning policy – Matteo Renzi, its leader, was mocked as a younger copy of Berlusconi – will not be happy with this coalition, nor will those who voted M5S for its anti-establishment position. Conversely, Lega with only 17 percent of votes is in power and for the first time has managed to rebrand itself as a national party. Not bad for a party that once wanted to split the North of the country from the rest.

We analysed the M5S after their first electoral 'success' in 2013 (*Socialist Standard*, May 2013). At that time as now, this movement – they do not like to call themselves a party – played the moral card. This resonates very well with Italians who are sick and tired of being governed by a corrupt elite. This is a problem that Italy has had since its artificial foundation back in 1861, and made the fortune of several parties in the past, including the Communist Party in the 1970s and the Lega itself in the 1990s.

Lega Nord was badly hit when it was involved in a series of scandals. Amongst others one involved its founder, Umberto Bossi and his son 'the trout', for stealing money from the party's funds; another linked Lega to the world's most powerful organized crime syndicate, the Calabrian Ndrangheta. Matteo Salvini, the new leader, managed to dissociate the party from all of this and recycled the usual anti-EU, anti-immigration, and anti-establishment mantra. Salvini tried to get some international visibility lining up with Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders, and of course Donald Trump (jokes in Italy made much of the fact that Trump did not know who Salvini was, while the latter was proudly going around with a selfie they took together). The 5-Star Movement also had to rebrand itself somewhat to gain distance from its founder, comedian Beppe Grillo. Luigi Di Maio emerged as a main figure..

M5S and the Lega have several things in common. Both are anti-EU. In the European Parliament the 5-Star Movement lined up with Nigel Farage's UKIP. Both want or at least wanted a referendum similar to Brexit. This also created some



uncertainty around whether they would be able to form a coalition government, since the President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, could in principle veto it.

Both M5S and Lega promised

lower taxes. Lega based a large part of its campaign on the flat tax, which would be 15 percent for all, poor and rich. M5S defined it as a 'flop tax', because it won't work and would not encourage spending; on this they are right, it wouldn't. M5S proposed to simplify the tax system reducing it to three levels of income: 23 percent for low income, 37 percent for average income, 42 percent for income above €100,000 a year. Eventually M5S and Lega will probably compromise with two levels.

Both M5S and Lega want to abolish the current hated pension law (legge Fornero). They seem to agree on the 'quotient 100'; this would mean that if a person starts to work at the age of 30 they could retire at the age of 65 (65+35=100), but if one has started working at the age of 20 one could retire at the age of 60 (60+40=100). They also promised to increase the minimum pensions.

The iconic warhorse of the M5S was the so-called 'Reddito di cittadinanza' (basic income). Many believed that this was a vote-catcher, particularly in the south of Italy. The basic income is the unconditional right to have an income; this is often confused with the minimum income, which is a subsidy to provide a basic standard of living but is conditional on having a wage. To be precise, M5S proposed something in between these two. Lega, however, is not in favour of such a basic income and proposes an 'autonomy and inclusion income' which would provide very meagre benefits for the poor.

Claudio Borghi, Lega's economist, is pushing the idea, which is not even his own, of establishing treasury mini-bonds (€1 to €500), to create an alternative money to the euro within the EU regulations. These, according to Borghi, will be used to pay off the public arrears; people would be able to use them to pay taxes or buy services offered by the state. This mini-bond will not pay interest nor have maturity. Borghi sees it as a first step towards Ital-exit. This is a monetary measure, which as such does not address the structural problems of the Italian economy. If anything it just aims to mimic a monetary devaluation.

Finally, the M5S movement also promised to establish a Public Investment Bank similar to Bpifrance to help banks and enterprises and finance public works.

We are facing the usual Keynesian economic strategy to encourage economic growth and promote spending, where the state tries to boost the economy via lower taxes for enterprises and entrepreneurs (Public Bank and flat tax), and more money to low income people via basic income, an anti-austerity policy. As we know, it will not work, but this is all that in a time of crisis the bourgeoisie can come up with apart from austerity.

CESCO

(See the blog of our Italian group: <http://socialismo-mondiale.blogspot.com>)

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Riding for a fall

John McDonnell is portrayed by his critics as an opponent of capitalism. He goes along with this but is riding for a fall. An interview with the BBC on 20 May was reported the next day in the *Times* under the headline 'McDonnell: I'd overthrow capitalism':

'The shadow chancellor said he wanted to transform society "in a way that radically changes the system". Asked if his job was the overthrow of capitalism, he replied: "Yes it is. It's transforming the economy." Pressed on whether there was a difference between transforming and overthrowing capitalism, he said: "I don't think there is ... I want a socialist society.'

These days, this sounds quite radical but in fact is merely what previous generations of Labour Party reformists have held. They envisaged the state capitalist economy adopted as their long-term aim in 1918, and which they called 'socialism,' coming into being gradually through a series of nationalisations and social reforms enacted by successive parliaments and Labour governments. This is what

McDonnell means when he talks of 'transforming the economy'; this to be a gradual process, 'overthrowing' capitalism piece by piece. It's the classic reformist position.

This involves presiding over the operation of capitalism for a long period. However, capitalism cannot be reformed so as to work in the interest of 'the many'. Capitalism runs on profits and any government which takes on the task of presiding over its operation is sooner or later forced to recognise this and, in the end, to allow and even encourage profit-making to take priority over pro-worker reforms. This has been the fate of all Labour governments.

A Labour government, with McDonnell as chancellor, would be in an even weaker position than previous ones. His 'transformation of the economy' is to begin while leaving production entirely in the hands of private profit-seeking businesses:

'Asked by the BBC what he would do to private businesses Mr McDonnell replied: "We'd follow France's example – they legislate for profit-sharing. We'd expect companies to profit-share as well as ensure they have a decent wage policy."

Profit-sharing, that old swindle! It's what the Tories used to promote as 'people's capitalism' and as a way to get workers to believe that their interest was

the same as their employer's. Trade unionists opposed this as it substituted a contracted wage of a regular amount by one in which a part of wages varies with the profitability of the employer's business.

The best known profit-sharing business in Britain is the John Lewis 'Partnership' (as it calls itself). Its latest annual report shows how profit, and so the 'profit-sharing' part of wages, can go down – and down – as well as up: 'John Lewis Partnership (JLP) has cut its annual staff bonus to the lowest level in 64 years after profit plunged at the group, which owns Waitrose and a chain of department stores ... Sir Charles Mayfield, the chairman, said it had been a "challenging year". He blamed the downturn in profit and the staff payout – which has been cut for five years in a row – on subdued consumer demand and "significant changes to operations across the partnership, which affected many partners". Mayfield said the coming year was likely to put further pressure on profit' (*Guardian*, 18 March). McDonnell, apparently, regards schemes which allow take-home pay to be cut five years in a row as 'a decent wage policy'. And, of course, 'profit-sharing' implies that production for profit continues.

WOOD FOR THE TREES

A Matter of Perspective

LIVING IN a prosperous part of South England I occasionally encounter people who claim to be happy with their lives. They seem not to be suffering alienation in their work and are content with the standard of living it provides. What is a socialist to make of such an individual and is our call to revolution impotent in the face of such contentment? Certainly the traditional Marxist case depends on developing and politicising the pre-existing frustration and unhappiness that usually accompanies wage slavery. What does socialism have to offer such people?

Although initially taken aback by the self-centeredness and political myopia of such individuals socialists can still offer them personal and political liberation by pointing to the perspectives of 'time and place'. In terms of time we will refer to the struggles of the past that have enabled them to enjoy the relative material and political freedoms they have

and point out that these can be eroded and/or destroyed by the instability of capitalism at any moment. The economic crashes that define capitalism can destroy jobs and savings just as its wars can murder its children.

Anyone who is content to leave the future of their children in the hands of politicians whose only loyalty is to those with wealth and power is surely guilty of both extreme naivety and neglect. And if they are fortunate enough to personally escape these wider inevitabilities then even the most optimistic among us would be in complete denial not to be concerned about the dangers of pollution and global warming that will be their inheritance.

As I grow older I become aware of just how fragile our individual world is. Even the most successful and healthy individual can succumb to accident or illness at any time. Although socialism could not prevent such vicissitudes of existence it will end the added stress that accompanies loss of earnings in capitalism. Falling into poverty because of illness

or bereavement is a common enough phenomenon in our present society. Living in a culture of such great inequality of wealth and opportunity creates crime. The relatively affluent among us are very fortunate if they do not fall victim to crime at some time. As Gil Scott Heron memorably said about injustice in his song *Angola Louisiana*: 'It can walk into your living room as long as it surrounds your home'. They might equip themselves with state-of-the-art security but all this does is foster the feeling of being 'under siege' and further alienates the individual from the wider community.

In terms of the 'place' element of our subversion of any feelings of smug contentment and complacency we need only point to the ease with which such a person can get on a plane and within hours be in the company of parents who have to watch their children die for the

year among the 200,000 injuries. Given the speed and power of contemporary vehicles together with the desperation to meet delivery deadlines combined with long and monotonous hours involved in commercial traffic, this is hardly surprising. Every time you start your car you take your life into your hands. There is an endless list of potential everyday hazards created by capitalism that can put you 'in the eye of the perfect storm' including: food adulteration, dangerous working conditions, tired doctors and nurses, faulty domestic appliances, etc., etc. I thought, at one time, that I had finally come across a purely 'natural disaster' when I heard about the terrible tsunami in Sri Lanka some years ago; only to discover that the local council had turned off the early warning system because of 'financial considerations'!

Life is fragile enough without the

additional threats inherent within capitalism. We are so interdependent that we are all, by default, 'our brother's keeper'. The ultimate perspective was first provided by the Apollo 8 spacecraft back in 1968 when it emerged from behind the moon to see our planet



want of clean water. This is not some unrelated and alien 'third world' but a world that our actions and/or inaction have created. The components of the electronics (for instance) that a 'first world' consumer enjoys may well depend on the low wages of a sweat shop on the other side of the world. Because capital always flows to the area of production with the highest rate of exploitation this quite often means, in the underdeveloped world, very low wages and so contributes greatly to maintaining regional poverty.

And you don't have to travel far to be 'in the wrong place at the wrong time' since the very act of travelling can kill or maim you. A staggering 1.3 million fatalities occur on the roads every year as part of the overall 50 million injuries per annum. In this country alone there is an average of 2,000 fatalities per

some 240,000 miles distant. If life is fragile then just how much more is its host; a tiny blue jewel hanging in the midst of nothingness. It is the shared inheritance of us all and no parasitic minority should be allowed to destroy it. At the moment the majority of our species inhabit this world like ghosts haunting it instead of truly living as a part of it. We urgently need to realise this and resurrect ourselves as politically conscious and interactive members of the human family so that we may protect each other and our planet – that is our challenge to those who profess to be content with their lives.

WEZ

The NHS, from Birth to Old Age

The National Health Service began seventy years ago, on 5 July 1948. One initial consequence was an enormous rush of patients who needed treatment that was now free at the point of use. One doctor, who had qualified on that very day, referred to:

'the colossal amount of very real unmet need that just poured in needing treatment. There were women with prolapsed uteruses literally wobbling down between their legs

... It was the same with hernias. You would have men walking around with trusses holding these colossal hernias in. And they were all like that because they couldn't afford to have it done. They couldn't afford to consult a doctor, let alone have an operation.' (Quoted in Nicholas Timmins: *The Five Giants*)

There had of course been progress in medical care before the NHS, such as big reductions in infant mortality, increases in life expectancy and much-improved treatment of infectious

diseases such as TB. Better sanitation and so on had helped, but medical knowledge had improved too. During the Second World War, the Emergency Medical Service had provided free treatment, not just to war casualties but also to war workers, child evacuees and so on, and had resulted in the creation of a national blood transfusion service.

The Beveridge Report of 1942 advocated the establishment of 'A national health service for prevention and comprehensive treatment available to all members of the community'. In reality, it was a way of getting workers who were ill well enough to go back to work; and, like most things under capitalism, it was done on the cheap. The talk of prevention entirely missed the point that much illness – both physical and mental – is caused by the way society is arranged, with dangerous and unhealthy living and working

conditions and a great deal of stress inflicted on people.

The idea of free treatment lasted just three years, as in 1951 charges were introduced for dentures and spectacles. For the NHS cost far more than the government had expected: two-thirds more than predicted in its first nine months alone. The view that, as better care made people healthier, the cost of the NHS would fall turned out to be an illusion. As time went on, the idea of treatment that was free for all was gradually abandoned more and more, since the capitalists' taxes simply could not pay the full cost and patients had to bear some of the burden. Free eye tests, for instance, were dropped in 1987. Nowadays only certain categories of people receive free dental care, and a medical prescription costs £8.60 per item (with a number of exemptions).

There were many changes over the years, partly as a result of advances in medical technology, such as transplant surgery, and the introduction of magnetic resonance imaging. But a constant theme was the mismatch between what was needed for patients and what could be afforded. Technical advances meant expensive new equipment had to be purchased; and people are living longer, resulting in them having more and more conditions that need to be treated. There have been frequent reorganisations, and privatisation and outsourcing have become commonplace, all undermining further the original vision of free and equal treatment for all, and they have been introduced in similar ways by both Labour and Conservative governments. Problems with, and cuts to, social care mean increasing difficulties for the NHS, which has more patients to cope with.

A nurse who is a socialist was interviewed in the June 1991 *Socialist Standard*. She made the point that the reforms brought in that year in April were to ensure that the NHS conformed to the demands of the market. She noted too the absurdity of applying price considerations to the provision of health care: 'many pieces of technical equipment are unused because nobody can afford to buy their use'.

A particular problem in recent years, though no doubt it existed before, is that of stress among NHS staff. Almost two-thirds of young hospital doctors 'say their physical or mental health is being damaged because pressures on the NHS are putting them under intolerable strain' (*Guardian online*, 11 February 2017). There are also issues with recruitment, some but not all of them due to Brexit and the uncertainty that has created. Employing and retaining general practitioners is a particular problem, with many GP surgeries closing because they simply cannot be staffed. At present there is in all a shortage of at least forty thousand medical staff.

According to the British Social Attitudes survey, public satisfaction with the NHS was at 57 percent in 2017, a drop of six points on the previous year. The main reasons for being satisfied were the quality of care, treatment being free at the point of use, the attitudes and behaviour of staff, and the range of services and treatments available. Dissatisfaction was due to staff shortages, long waiting times, lack of funding, and government reforms. Despite all its problems, though, people consider that the NHS remains a key part of the welfare state.

A decent health care system would have increased resources, and treat both staff and patients far better than happens now. The socialist nurse mentioned above stated, 'socialist hospitals will keep patients in for longer periods. At the moment hospitals do their best to throw patients out so that their beds can be filled, new money can be made. People need to be properly looked after and capitalism isn't letting us do that as well as we can and should.' In fact it is arguable whether keeping patients in for longer is such a good idea, and a socialist health service might well put far more emphasis on prevention rather than cure. But decisions about such matters will be made on the basis of what is in the true interests of those being treated, rather than what serves capitalism and profits.

PAUL BENNETT



The Rich Stay Rich

Part three of our series on ‘philanthrocapitalism’

If ‘self-made billionaires’ tend to be ‘more willing to give their money away than those who inherit their fortunes’ as Bishop and Green contend then, seemingly, the prospect of philanthrocapitalism making a larger impact on society depends to some extent on a relative increase in the proportion of wealthy individuals who allegedly made their wealth in this way. In other words, on the degree to which individuals are able to become upwardly ‘socially mobile’. On current trends, however, this seems unlikely. If anything, what seems more likely is that the significance of inherited wealth is going to grow in relative terms.

What helps to sustain the myth of ‘self-made men’ is precisely the belief that we live in a socially mobile society in which inheritance plays only a negligible role. This discounting of the importance of inheritance is a characteristic feature of conservative sociological analysis and its barely concealed aim of wanting to justify the existence of gross inequalities. Such inequalities will tend to be more tolerated insofar as it is assumed they reflect the workings of a meritocratic principle. The rich are rich because of hard work, runs the argument. That’s quite true, of course, except that it omits to mention that it is other people’s hard work that made them rich.

In a sense, then, the argument about the role of inheritance in perpetuating gross inequalities is a distraction. Whether the capitalists inherited their wealth or ‘made’ it, that wealth overwhelmingly derives from that portion of the labour performed by working people that is effectively unpaid or unreciprocated. The only virtue in drawing attention to the significance of inheritance in modern capitalism is that it helps to clarify this point and make it all the more obvious.

How significant a role does inherited wealth play in modern capitalism, then? This is a difficult question to answer. Partly this is because what is called ‘inheritance’ is not simply what it is often imagined to be as Lisa Keister and Stephanie Moller explain in their article, ‘Wealth Inequality in the United States’:

‘We know very little about how wealth is actually inherited because data on inheritance is virtually nonexistent. Indeed, Menchik & Jianakoplos (1998) estimated that between the 1970s and 1990s, as little as 20% and as much as 80% of total wealth may have been inherited. Those who study inheritance typically refer to three forms of inheritance: inheritance at the death of a parent or other benefactor, inter-vivos transfers of money and other assets, and transfers of cultural capital (Miller & McNamee 1998:3) While we typically think of inheritance as occurring at the death of the benefactor, Kurz (1984) estimated that inter-vivos transfers account for nearly 90% of intergenerational wealth transfers’ (*Annual Review of Sociology*, August 2000, Vol 26: 63-81).

Study after study has confirmed that, far from ‘social mobility’ in America (and elsewhere) increasing, it is on the wane (and, along with it, faith in the ‘American dream’). This seems to have gone hand in hand with the steadily widening gap between rich and poor. If you are born poor today you are more likely to remain poor than was the case with your parents or grandparents but the corollary of that is that, if you are born rich, your offspring are more likely to remain rich, too. Meaning that the role of inheritance is likely to loom ever larger as an explanation for the extremely skewed distribution of income and wealth. Consequently, if it is true that the ‘self-



made’ super-rich give more to charity than those who inherit their wealth, this would seem to imply that a relative long-term decline in charitable donations from the super-rich is in prospect.

According to Thomas Picketty, author of the best seller, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2013), the recent growth in inequality augurs a return to the ‘patrimonial capitalism’ of the Gilded Age and the dynastic wealth of a rentier economy. In America, for example, the share of total wealth owned by the top 0.1 percent increased from 7 percent in late 1970 to 22 percent in 2012. This is approaching levels of inequality to be found in the era of the Robber Barons.

What is driving this process, argues Picketty, is the simple fact that the rate of return on capital has been consistently exceeding the rate of economic growth over the past few decades, meaning the super-rich have been appropriating a steadily growing slice of the economic pie. A kind of positive feedback loop is at work which ensures that, to those who have, shall more be given, simply by virtue of the fact that they have the capital to invest which the rest of us don’t. If you are securing a rate of return that exceeds the rate at which the economy is growing, then, logically, that can only mean you are accumulating wealth at the expense of others who lack capital. Inequalities in the distribution of wealth and income will thus grow. That, in turn, acts to slow down or impede social mobility and thus boost the significance of inheritance. The recipients of this inherited wealth not only benefit directly but indirectly too by capitalising on all advantages that great wealth bestows upon them in terms of social capital, having connections with the right people and so on.

The problem is, as Picketty suggests, that while some of the super-rich might claim to have earned their wealth by the sweat of their brows, plainly the same could not really be said of their offspring inheriting this wealth. The corollary of reduced upward mobility is obviously reduced downward mobility – meaning an increased capacity for the super-rich to hang on to their huge fortunes and thus to pass them on to their heirs.

Inheritance is thus the cuckoo in the nest of capitalist ideological legitimization. With the rich getting increasingly richer at the expense of the rest, more and more discrediting the myth of upward social and intergenerational mobility, it is going to be increasingly difficult to justify their huge fortunes in the face of these stubborn realities. The disconnect between ‘merit’ and ‘reward’, which were never closely linked to begin with, will become ever more apparent.

This is where the ideological significance of philanthrocapitalism comes into the picture. It represents an attempt to shore up a failing mechanism of ideological legitimization by projecting an image of the philanthrocapitalist as a generous benefactor and of capitalism itself, as a system that can be philanthropic, working for the good of mankind (<http://philanthrocapitalism.net/about/faq/>). It is the application of a fresh lick of paint on a crumbling façade that barely conceals the stark structural reality of capitalist exploitation.

Exploitation and charity

While philanthrocapitalism focuses on what the rich give to the poor it would be far more to the point to focus on what

the poor give to the rich. According to Barbara Ehrenreich the appropriate response to such giving ought to be one of ‘shame’:

‘shame at our own dependency, in this case, on the underpaid labor of others. When someone works for less pay than she can live on — when, for example, she goes hungry so that you can eat more cheaply and conveniently — then she has made a great sacrifice for you, she has made you a gift of some part of her abilities, her health, and her life. The “working poor,” as they are approvingly termed, are in fact the major philanthropists of our society. They neglect their own children so that the children of others will be cared for; they live in substandard housing so that other homes will be shiny and perfect’ (*Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*, 2001).

However, the problem with Ehrenreich’s way of framing the whole question is that it is seriously misleading. She is focussing only on the lowest paid members of the working class, those who are ‘underpaid’. The presumption seems to be that were they not ‘underpaid’ but paid at the going rate they would have no cause for grievance. Her perspective is the suppressed view of a ruling class which she faithfully echoes in talking of ‘our’ dependency on the ‘underpaid labour’ of others. She ignores completely the unpaid labour that workers in general contribute towards the accumulation of capital even when they are not ‘underpaid’. Her sympathy for the ‘working poor’ is the sentiment of a guilt-ridden liberal trying to eradicate the more unpalatable aspects of contemporary capitalism and to soften some of its rough edges.

What makes the working class – not just Ehrenreich’s ‘working poor’ – ‘the major philanthropists of our society’ is the brute fact of surplus value, the value which our class creates over and above what it receives by way of a wage. As Friedrich Engels put it: ‘It is infamous, this charity of a Christian capitalist! As though they rendered the workers a service in first sucking out their very life-blood and then placing themselves before the world as mighty benefactors of humanity when they give back to the plundered victims the hundredth part of what belongs to them!’ (*The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 1845).

But even if we look at philanthropy in its more conventional sense as the voluntary donation of money and effort to others, it is quite misleading to portray this as the prerogative of the rich alone. Workers likewise give handsomely in this sense.

Indeed, according to one survey, individuals with incomes below \$25,000 gave away around 4.2 percent of their income while those on an income of \$150,000 or more gave away around 2.7 percent. Research carried out by Dacher Keltner revealed that ‘lower class people just show more empathy, more prosocial behavior, more compassion, no matter how you look at it’ (www.alternet.org/economy/5-studies-show-how-wealth-warps-your-soul)

ROBIN COX

(Next month, concluding article: No Such Thing As A Free Gift)



The higher effective demand has pushed up the price of land and so of housing there. This has had various consequences. It has provided an incentive for private landlords to improve their property so that they can let it at a higher rent, meaning that it becomes impossible for lower and even average paid workers to continue to find accommodation in the area at a rent they can afford. It has also put developers in a position to bring pressure on local councils to let them ‘redevelop’ or ‘regenerate’ the area by demolishing old, lower-rent housing to replace it by newly-built, more expensive housing.

Sweeteners

In fact so profitable is this – in terms

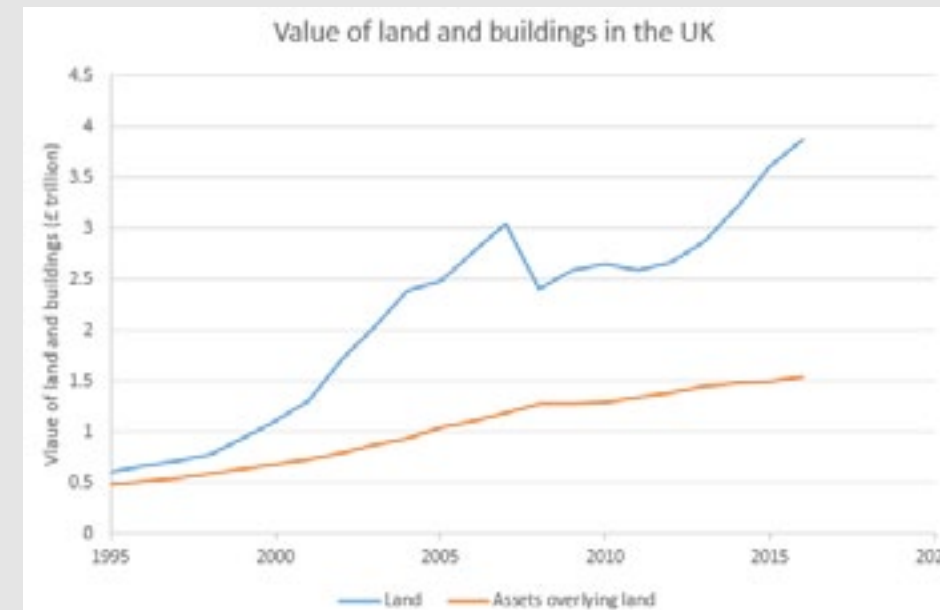
of increase in the price of the land compared with what they paid for it –that the developers are able to offer sweeteners to local councils, in the form of providing libraries, health centres and council office space, as a way of getting planning permission, offers which cash-strapped councils cannot afford to refuse. Councils do have some power as it is they who have to give planning permission. They use this to ask that the developers include an element of ‘affordable’ housing in their scheme. They don’t do much more than ask as if they insist too much the developer will simply walk away. In any event, ‘affordable housing’, defined as up to 80 percent of the average market rent in an area where market forces have driven rents up, is still not affordable for most people.

There are also let-out clauses under which, after permission has been given and construction commenced, developers can plead ‘unforeseen’ costs or other difficulties for not being able to provide as much such housing as originally agreed, as in this example:

‘A developer has called on Kingston Council to remove an affordable housing clause from its development plans. The Battersea Development Company has submitted a planning application to “seek a revised affordable housing obligation” for Willow Court in Cambridge Road, Kingston.

In a letter to the council its agent states: “The affordable housing obligation as currently agreed makes the proposed development scheme unviable in current market conditions. Our client wishes to amend the affordable housing obligation” (*Surrey Comet*, 15 June 2015).

There is ‘social’ housing – the modern equivalent of the 1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act – in the form either of council housing or of not-for-profit housing associations, both of which can charge a maximum of only 80 percent of the local market rate. These days, what’s left of council housing is generally low-quality accommodation used for housing people councils have a legal obligation to house. Housing associations, under pressure to balance their books, have begun to behave like property companies, even resorting to private landlord scams like charging a rip-off fee for renewing a tenancy contract as well as paying their top managers bloated salaries. As a Liberal Democrats candidate in the recent London



could command a higher rent than would be charged, doing this would amount to a rent subsidy for some workers. But capitalism is not a system geared to meeting people’s needs or even making things easier for people. It is a system that runs on profits under which profits and conditions for profit-making have to come first. For the past ten years governments everywhere have been committed to cutting, not increasing, state spending so as to reduce the burden of taxation on profits in the aftermath of the Great

borough elections lamented:

‘Even housing associations are now more interested in speculative development than in looking after their elderly and vulnerable tenants’ (*Ham, Petersham & Richmond Riverside Comments*, No. 242, February 2018).

Easily promised

Those who imagine that this particular housing problem – which is essentially an affordability problem – can be solved within the framework of capitalism offer various solutions.

One is a tax on rising land prices, or a Land Value Tax as its advocates call it. This would certainly put an end to developers (but also ordinary homeowners) speculating on the price of land rising. It would transfer the benefit of this to national or local government which could be used to reduce other forms of taxation, but it would not stop land and so housing prices from rising in the areas concerned and which make housing there unaffordable for low-paid workers.

Why not let local councils acquire the land that developers hold and use it to build houses and flats to let at a rent that lower and average paid people can afford rather than luxury flats? To many that might seem to be an obvious solution and it’s what the reformists of the Labour Party and the Green Party propose. But this is easier promised than done because under capitalism everything has to be paid for. Doing this

would be hugely expensive, if only because the land would have to be acquired, even if compulsorily, at the going market rate inflated as it is by the increased effective demand for it.

Where is this money to come from? Most of what local councils have to spend comes from the central government in the form of grants (for current spending) and loans (for capital spending). House-building would be capital spending, so the councils’ debt repayment burden would go up (many are still paying off the capital plus interest for council houses they built in the past). This would be at the expense of other services unless the government increased the grants for these. But how likely is that?

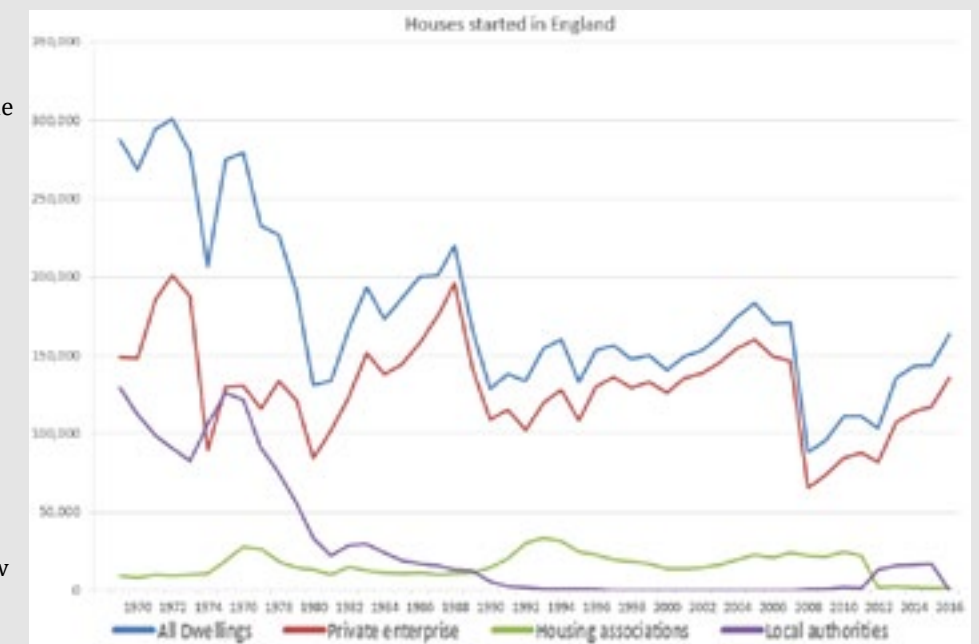
As housing on the acquired land

Crash of 2008 and the ensuing slump. This is not a political choice that could be reversed by a different choice, but something imposed on governments by the economic forces of capitalism that dictate that priority has to be given to profits over everything else, including social measures to benefit workers.

Even in times of boom capitalism is not a system geared to meeting people’s needs and cannot be reformed into this. This can be, and has been, attempted by Labour and reformist governments in other countries but it has always ended in tears. It is conceivable that a future Labour government under Corbyn and McDonnell might adopt a land purchase and subsidised rent scheme to deal with the problem of housing for lower and average paid workers being unaffordable in areas of rising land prices. If so, they are likely to finance it by recourse to the printing press. The resulting higher inflation and economic slowdown would sooner or later force them to do a U-turn.

The plain fact is that there is no solution to the housing problem for workers within the framework of capitalism. It will always exist, in one form or another, for as long as the capitalist system of class ownership and production for profit does.

ADAM BUICK



The two main threats to the survival and wellbeing of humankind and the biosphere – war and the environmental crisis – are usually considered separately. In fact, however, the two problems are closely connected: neither of them can be solved without at the same time tackling the other.

On the one hand, the environmental crisis generates conditions that make war more likely. Soil erosion, desertification, deforestation, acidification of the oceans and similar processes intensify competition for control over arable land, sources of fresh water, fishing grounds and other natural resources. Alternating flood and drought augment the flow of refugees. Cross-border impacts fuel new international tensions.

On the other hand, war and other military activity – development, manufacture, testing and maintenance of weapons and equipment, military training, military games and exercises, disposal of waste – themselves make a major contribution to the environmental crisis. Danger and secrecy impede attempts to gauge this contribution and assessments of environmental issues usually ignore it. That is one of the main reasons why global heating is proceeding so much more rapidly than predicted. Even in peacetime, for example, the Department of Defense is the largest consumer of fossil fuels in the United States, causing CO₂ emissions roughly equal to those of Denmark, but military emissions are excluded from international climate agreements.

War devastation

The list of countries and regions devastated by war is long and growing longer, from Congo and Libya to Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, the Gaza Strip, Yemen and Kashmir. War devastation takes many forms. Some are well known – the bombed-out buildings, the piles of rubble, the landmines lying in wait for their victims. Less well known but no less noxious are the diverse forms of environmental devastation, including:

- * toxic heavy metals (e.g., lead, tungsten, mercury, molybdenum, cadmium, cobalt) and white phosphorus deposited by bombing in the soil and the water supply, causing tumors, congenital deformities and other serious effects

- * radiation from the depleted uranium (DU) used in manufacturing munitions, spreading cancer, cerebral palsy and other diseases (militaries like bullets made of DU fused with metal alloys because they are better at penetrating armour.)

- * radiation and toxins released into the environment by the bombing of nuclear power stations and chemical plants



- * urine and excrement in the streets and streams as a result of destruction of the sewage system

- * oil pollution from damage to pipelines and refineries (Iraqi troops retreating from Kuwait in 1991 torched 630 oil wells, turning the sea and sky black.)

Nuclear war and nuclear winter

Even a ‘minor’ nuclear war would be an ecological disaster felt throughout the

world. The best studied case is that of a ‘limited’ regional nuclear war between India and Pakistan in which 100 Hiroshima-sized warheads (less than half of these states’ nuclear arsenals) are detonated mainly over cities. Besides the 20 million projected short-term deaths and longer-term victims of radiation, such an exchange would inject up to 6.5 million tonnes of soot into the upper atmosphere, cooling the global climate for several years and reducing summer crop yields in various countries by 12-16 percent over a 10-year period.

In a full-scale nuclear war between Russia or China and the United States, direct casualties would of course be far higher and the amount of soot much greater. A prolonged ‘nuclear winter’ would ensue, leading to the extinction or near-extinction of *Homo sapiens* and other species (with the exception of primitive organisms in the deep ocean that do not need sunlight).

Routine activities

Even in times of peace the military does enormous harm to the environment in the course of its routine activities. Thus the Department of Defense is not only the largest consumer of fossil fuels in the United States, it is also the largest polluter, generating more toxic waste than the five biggest American chemical companies combined (according to an estimate made in the late 1980s – a tonne per minute).

Let us consider three specific activities: weapons testing, waste disposal and war games.

Weapons testing

Large tracts of land are devoted to weapons testing. For example, Jefferson Proving Grounds in Indiana, 250 square kilometers in area, is so badly contaminated that it has been cordoned off and abandoned.

Before 1963, when the Soviet Union, Britain and the US banned nuclear weapons testing in the atmosphere, these powers conducted a long series of tests of atomic and hydrogen bombs in Kazakhstan, the Australian outback and the Pacific islands, respectively, inflicting radiation sickness on the indigenous people of these areas, who were not evacuated or even warned but used as guinea pigs. China continued nuclear weapons testing at its site in Xinjiang until 1996.

Waste disposal

The manufacture and use of weapons generate a huge quantity of radioactive and toxic waste that somehow has to be disposed of. Often waste is just dumped into the sea. Much is stored in the ground under conditions that do not prevent leakage.

A 100-acre basin for the storage of military waste at Rocky Mountain Arsenal in Colorado has been called ‘the earth’s most toxic square mile’. However, there are probably sites in Russia that are no less toxic and perhaps even less safe, such as Kildin Island in the Barents Sea, home to used-up nuclear reactors and other parts of old nuclear submarines.

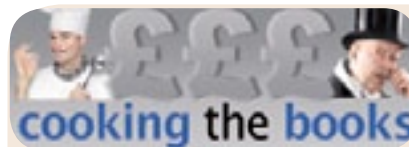
War games

War games and military exercises are a source of less drastic but still considerable environmental damage, both on land and at sea. Naval war games, for instance, poison or otherwise harm numerous species of fish, marine mammals and other sea life. The sensitive auditory systems of many whales and dolphins are injured by underwater sonar from submarines. Many non-marine species are also harmed by noise from military aircraft.

President Trump’s decision at his summit with Kim Jong Un to suspend the annual war games in South Korea is some small consolation.

Armaments manufacturing

Then there is the harm to the environment caused directly or indirectly by the process of manufacturing armaments. The production of explosives, for instance, requires toxic chemicals that leak into soil and groundwater. A telling example of the complex interaction between war and environmental damage is provided by the mining, processing



Quantity and quality

A surreal exchange took place between the British and Russian ambassadors at a meeting of the UN Security Council on 11 April to discuss whether or not to bomb Syria (they didn’t decide to, but the US, France and Britain went ahead anyway).

The British ambassador, Karen Pierce, threw Lenin at her counterpart, taunting ‘to quote Lenin, quantity has a quality all of its own.’ It is not clear what the quote is supposed to mean. The most plausible interpretation is that it means simply that numbers make a difference, that more counts for more than less. Lenin may well have agreed with this trite statement though there’s no evidence that he uttered it, but so would nearly everybody else.

The Russian ambassador, Vasily Nebenzya, answered with what he said was another quote from Lenin that ‘it is better to have less but better.’ This time the quote was genuine as Lenin did indeed write an article *Better Fewer, But Better*.

The British ambassador retorted:

‘Karl Marx must be turning in his grave to see what the country that was founded on many of his principles was doing in the name of supporting Syria.’

No doubt Marx did turn in his grave at this suggestion that Russia had been founded on some of his principles. Two of these were that socialism involved the end of working for wages and could only be democratic; neither of which was the case in the former USSR.

But he would not have been surprised at Russia trying to establish and maintain a naval base in the Mediterranean, as it now has at Tartus on the coast of Syria. This is what Tsarist Russia had been trying to do in his day. He might have been surprised that even after the overthrow of Tsarism it wasn’t long before Russia was pursuing the same expansionist policy as the Tsars, more successfully in fact as for some 45 years Russia dominated the whole of Eastern Europe, including a part of Germany and most of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire.

What made the exchange surreal was that neither took into account that, since 1991 and the collapse of the state capitalist regime there, Russia doesn’t claim any more to be ‘socialist’ or to be founded on Lenin’s let alone Marx’s principles. It is now openly capitalist like

and use of rare metals and rare earth elements. Besides civilian applications, these substances are widely used in military electronic systems for guidance and control, targeting and communications as well as in jet engines. Their extraction causes severe pollution (see *The Socialist Standard*, MW, May 2011). Moreover, there is high potential for conflict over control of deposits, as in the war in eastern Congo – a rich source of the rare metals cassiterite and coltan (see *The Socialist Standard*, MW, January 2009). Thus rare metals and rare earth elements are needed for use in war and war is waged to control them, while both their processing and their use in war cause great harm to the environment.

One World

The problem of war and the environmental crisis will find their joint resolution – if, that is, they are to be resolved at all – in the creation of One World – an undivided global community. Material and human resources will no longer be wasted and destroyed in war. People will devote their energy and talents to repairing a poisoned planet and devising an ecologically sustainable way of life.

Stefan



Abandoned Nuclear Test Site, Bikini Atoll

the West, the only difference being that the ruling class there are called oligarchs rather than billionaires.

Lenin did actually use the words ‘quantity’ and ‘quality’ together. He had read Hegel and was aware of the Hegelian ‘law of dialectics’ of changes in quantity leading to a change of quality. Engels gave the example of water changing from a liquid to a gas when the quantity of heat reached a certain point. This is more a description than a law, but has nothing to do with the statement that ‘quantity has a quality all of its own.’ *Better Fewer, But Better* was one of Lenin’s last articles (he died less than a year after writing it). In it, as in his other articles from 1923, he acknowledged that those who had said that socialism could not be established in Russia in 1917 because of its backwardness had been right, writing that Russia lacked ‘*enough civilisation to enable it to pass straight to socialism.*’ It was of course one of Marx’s principles that socialism could only be established when capitalism had created the material basis for it in the form of a technology capable of providing plenty for all and a working class capable of using it.

Intelligent machines, enough for an intelligent society?

Artificial Intelligence seems now more than ever a concrete reality. Machines can now learn in a similar way as humans and adapt to new problems and situations, solving problems which may have some degree of unpredictability. Quite some media coverage was dedicated to the victory of Google's AlphaGo, artificial intelligence system, over the best Go human player (Ke Jie). This is because unlike chess, Go is not only matter of logic, there is a degree of 'gut' feeling to it.

Artificial intelligence is founded in machine learning. This is a fascinating field of computer science which has experienced recent advances that have revived the concept of artificial intelligence. For the first time artificial intelligence seems more realistic than just a Sci-Fi story.

Machine learning boils down to an algorithm (a set of rules) being able to draw from a pool of data what the expected output is and rerun this process over and over until it gets it right. These training and iteration abilities are what makes the machine able to learn good old trial and error, but done by machines at mind-boggling speed. For example, given 10 images (e.g. human faces), the algorithm learns to recognise them using a limited number of features pre-selected by the human operator (e.g. face size, colour, shape, nose size, etc). It will then condense these features to the minimum required to recognise the images. The algorithm will not guess the images completely right at first, but, because it can compare its output (guess) to the real images manually labelled by a human operator, it will adjust its settings and try again and again until there is a perfect match. Moreover, when a new image is provided the machine is now trained to recognise it. This is what we humans learn to do at a very young age, when we are less than 2 years old.

An artificial neural network is a branch of machine learning. Here the algorithm pretends to work like the neurons of a brain. Given some inputs, let's say the features characterising an image, as with the human face in the previous example, several hidden layers will compute all possible combinations, which will lead to the most likely output. It is the typical *black box* approach, which means that no-one really knows what is going on inside it. Essentially, the machine is able to recognise images, sounds, or other things only because human labour has told them exactly what they were. All inputs (e.g. images) need to be labelled. Nothing amazing so far, and lots of human labour involved.

The story becomes more interesting when these algorithms become able to learn in an unsupervised way (without labels). These are multi-layered algorithms, also known as deep learning algorithms. Let's say that I apply an algorithm that has learned to recognise types of dogs to now recognise types of cats, but in the latter case I do not have labels or features which will tell the algorithm which is what. The algorithm will extract features itself based on patterns inherited in the data itself, and will use the prior 'knowledge' acquired when learning to recognise dogs. Deep learning is the first credible, though rudimentary, concretisation of artificial intelligence. The step of self-learning is an important breakthrough

in technology. Some even dare to say that this is the new industrial revolution. Yet, deep learning requires a huge amount of data (Big Data), high processing power and of course the capacity to store this data. All these do not come out of nowhere, but require a huge amount of human labour.

Open-source services, or platforms like Google and Android, or open-application programming interfaces in general, have facilitated the advances in deep learning through being able to produce big data and in some cases build on each other's work. Data becomes so valuable that the privacy of those who have provided it is often neglected (see Facebook and others alike), requiring the intervention of governments to set new boundaries (see the recent General Data Protection Regulations).

For the first time, some 'skilled' jobs risk being substituted by intelligent machines. Is this a problem? Some trade unions are starting to talk about a robot tax, in order to compensate for the jobs robots are going to take away from humans. Some others question whether Marx's labour theory of value still makes sense when human labour is no longer involved in the production process.

The whole point of a system not based on exploitation of human labour is to have machines that would do most or possibly all of the work for us. Within the logic of the labour theory of value it is clear that if no humans are involved in the production of goods and services, the organic composition of capital (fixed capital / variable capital) would be affected, meaning there is fixed capital only, and so the rate of profit would be affected too (surplus value/fixed capital + variable capital), potentially becoming zero. In other words, if no human works, no human will receive a salary, thus most will not be able to afford to buy the very commodities being produced.

Because of time factors and the interconnection of productive sectors, this depletion in exchange value would not happen overnight. In fact, as long as there are workers with enough salary, and capitalists with enough profits, to close the productive cycle with a successful sale, profit for the fully automated companies would not be zero. Additionally, the abstract value crystallised in the making of the robots and their intelligent self-learning algorithms originally come from humans. Yet, the more productive cycles are conducted in full automation the less the profit generated. We are nowhere near that degree of automation yet.

The question is, would this type of development be the natural end of capitalism? No, it wouldn't. It would influence economic crises for sure and mass poverty as it always did. Capitalism won't collapse by itself, though, it will adapt. Not all jobs will be in any case replaceable. Soft skills jobs will still be conducted by humans. Capitalism will carry on with its contradictions and sharp inequality. Automation in a capitalist society will mean changes in the patterns of employment and unemployment, whereas in a socialist society, it can liberate humans from manual labour aimed at producing goods and services. It will allow humans to acquire skills and improve society.

CESCO



'One Does'

IF NOTHING else, the recent royal wedding was a fluffy distraction from all the other grim goings-on around the world. And helped by the blanket media coverage, a lot of people lapped it up. The nobs' nuptials have been the most-watched TV event of the year, netting 11 million viewers, around four million more than the FA Cup final later the same day. The Scottish Cup final was also held on 19th May, at which thousands of Celtic fans made their own tribute by chanting 'you can shove your royal wedding up your arse'.

Predictably, the mainstream media was abuzz for months before the big day itself, finding any angle to draw in the punters. For instance, the tabloids and the telly thought we'd be on tenterhooks over whether Meghan Markle's father would attend, with brash headlines like 'Meg Dad: I've Got Heart Op Today'. Thomas Markle himself thought we'd be fascinated by him, having staged paparazzi-style photos and been interviewed for money. Also reported, and more

deserving of our attention, was the bus which offered a refuge to rough sleepers in Windsor being impounded by the police just before the wedding. Although Thames Valley Police said that The Ark Project's bus was taken off the road because its paperwork wasn't in order, it's easy to assume that the real reason was to airbrush away people who don't fit in with the occasion's fairytale image. The local council's Conservative leader had previously told the police he thought that rough sleepers should be removed ahead of the wedding.

On the day, the event itself took over much of the BBC, Sky News and ITV (without adverts, unusually). Sycophantic presenters such as Huw Edwards, Kirsty Young and Phillip Schofield interviewed people swept up by the knot-tying,



including guests from charities connected with the royals. And between the interviews and footage of the flag-waving crowds and photos of people dressed up at their own wedding-themed parties, there was celeb-spotting whenever a Beckham or a Clooney was around. The word 'modern' was used a lot by the pundits, especially when saying how 'diverse' the wedding was, partly through the mix of guests and officiators, but

it. The event was funded through the Windsors' coffers, which gets its income from profits of the Crown Estate, the Duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall, a parliamentary annuity, and income from private investments. Another wedding which broke the tradition of being paid for by the bride's family was William and Kate's, which was officially state funded, which still means worker funded.

So how much did it cost us? The average price of getting married, including the service, catering, dress and décor is £17,913, already more than a year's income for many. Harry and Meghan pushed the boat out a bit, though, including £90,000 going on bespoke silver plated fanfare trumpets. The bill for their wedding was around £2 million, although even this is only a small part of the overall estimated fee. Security arrangements cost a whopping £30 million, including a couple of million on 'drone destroyers' to target any craft used by terrorists or journalists. However, the occasion is predicted to rake in £500 million to the economy from tourism and souvenirs, so overall it was quite a lucrative investment for those at the top.

As well as a financial lift, the royal wedding

probably also gave the system a psychological boost. Events like this stir up patriotism, reinforcing a blinkered acceptance of the status quo. Even a cynical socialist might find something to admire in the spectacle of it all. Beneath this is the rather sad view that we can live vicariously through people enjoying pampered lives we'll never be able to have. The costs of the wedding alone highlight the gap between them and us. For all the talk of 'inclusivity', 'diversity' and being 'modern', the royal family is about as far as you can get from a beacon for equality.

MIKE FOSTER

But in a sense, we are all part of the royal wedding, because it's ultimately the profits we produced which paid for



The value of value



The Value of Everything. Making and Taking in the Global Economy. By Mariana Mazzucato. Allen Lane. 384 pages. £20 (hardback)

Mariana Mazzucato follows up her previous book, *The Entrepreneurial State*, with this fascinating look at how theories of value shape policy and economic behaviour. She reprises the core of that previous book in a chapter of this one, showing how much of the innovative success of capitalist firms in recent decades (such as the internet, GPS, etc.) actually stemmed from investment by the state, and only after the risky stage of product development did private capital swoop in to enormous rewards.

She begins with a brief history of national accounting, and how the question of the productive boundary – what is and is not a productive endeavour – gets brought into measuring these accounts. She notes that how we define this productive boundary shapes how we assess economic performance. She gives examples of difficulties: cleaning up pollution caused by industry adds to the productive side of the economy, but is actually correcting a major damage caused by cost saving by another firm. She notes that there is no economic accounting for housework and child rearing. She also points out that despite the role of the state in investing and driving innovation, the state is seen as inherently unproductive.

Her goal is not to define a new way of looking at value, but to open up the debate on why a theory of value is needed. She notes that the current orthodoxy, marginal utility theory (which essentially sees value as deriving from how useful the next additional unit of a good is, rather than how useful a good is in itself) essentially, as she notes, this resolves into saying that the value of a good is whatever anyone is prepared to pay for it (and thus any good or services anyone pays for is productive). As a theory it abolishes any standard of value to measure prices by (it doesn't allow for the concepts of bargains or rip-offs)

and justifies the idea that markets are the most efficient measure of demand.

As she notes, marginal utility theorists maintain there is no unemployment, just a rational choice between income and leisure. As there is no measure beyond the market, it means that financial industries, that were once considered unproductive and merely distributive of wealth, can claim to be part of the productive economy. She passes into a quick mention of the idea that banks create money, with the added and helpful twist that sees that alleged ability deriving from the near monopoly of banks created by the state licensing system. This means, in effect that it isn't private banks creating money, but the state.

She also gives a brief schematic account of the labour theory of value, and an account of Marx' place in the history of the discussion of what is productive. She gives one of the better accounts of Marx' theories you'll likely find in any popular economics book. Marx noted that any activity that generates a surplus value for a capitalist was productive. What Mazzucatto misses in her account, is that Marx was clear that this was productive for capitalists and within a capitalist economy. This 'valuable, for whom?' is missing in most of her account, although she clearly gives hints that she would rather see a system of value accounting that gives a positive role to the state.

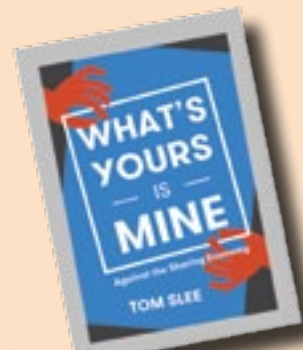
Her perspective is broadly Keynesian, seeing the struggle between the rent seeking of finance and the productive capacity of industry, and siding with productive capital. One aspect of her narrative that seems to undermine her case for stricter financial regulation, is that she recounts how the banks broke out of their previous regulated regime, and basically forced deregulation. Where there are profits to be made, they will be sought.

This is a useful read, and an opportunity for socialists to get involved in a debate about ensuring that the best way forward is to put an end to economic value through common ownership and the production of an abundance of wealth for use rather than exchange. We would still need mechanisms to assess resources and effective use, but we wouldn't need a singular measure of personal wealth like a private market economy requires.

PIK SMEET



Bigger Shares



Tom Slee: What's Yours is Mine: Against the Sharing Economy. Scribe. £9.99.

The Sharing Economy (with capitals) is Slee's term for what some people call, among other terms, peer-to-peer platforms. Customers and suppliers are able to get in touch with each other by means of the internet and smartphone apps, with the platform company taking a cut of the price paid.

Airbnb, which is probably the best-known example, probably sounds like a reasonable idea, allowing people to rent out spare rooms to short-stay visitors. But in fact it has evolved into something quite different: most lets are of whole houses or flats and are made by landlords who own several properties. They do not need to worry about health and safety regulations or providing fire extinguishers. Those who lose business to them are not big hotel chains like Hilton but small independent hotels and B&Bs. There are even cases of tenants being kicked out because the owner can make more money from short-term lets via Airbnb. (For some other examples of bad experiences as visitors or landlords, see airbnbhell.com.)

Besides property letting, the other main area of the Sharing Economy is transport, primarily Uber. Earlier ride-sharing apps have fallen by the wayside, being unable to compete. Grandiose claims about the amounts Uber drivers can earn have been discredited, and they in fact earn little more than most taxi-drivers. They do not have to worry about providing access for blind passengers or those who use wheelchairs. As part of the gig economy, drivers are not paid when off sick and have to provide their own insurance; moreover, they do not undergo proper screening by Uber.

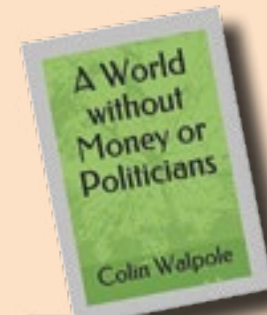
Slee says he wrote this book because 'the Sharing Economy agenda appeals to ideals with which I and many others identify; ideals such as equality, sustainability and community.' But capitalism undermines these ideals: even the Linux operating system, for instance, is now a commercial undertaking and is 'no longer subversive'. Ideas of openness have led to powerful institutions backed

by venture capital and dominated by Silicon Valley. Digital markets often result in a 'winner-takes-all' situation, with one massively powerful company in each area (Amazon, for example).

This book gives a clear and well-argued account of various aspects of the Sharing Economy, how the profit motive pervades most areas of life and how attempts to get round it can just lead to yet more profit-based industries.

PB

Moneyless



A World Without Money or Politicians. By Colin Walpole, 2017. Order through Amazon.

I had two reasons to buy this. Colin is my old 'boss.' I helped him, in my very small way, develop rugby union - his favourite sport - in a local city. Ex-pat that he is, he brought rugby union with him to Denmark and developed a very decent side. The other reason is clear enough: the SPGB has put a similar argument: a moneyless society of democratic control by the world's people.

Colin's booklet does not quote Marx, economics, anything. He makes observations, discusses thoughts, that he has had for years. That might make the booklet refreshing for many who might be bored by quotes from the Grundrisse. Colin states his thoughts a few pages in. Get rid of a money economy and replace politicians by a direct democracy: 'I've convinced myself that money gets in the way of self-fulfilment'.

Colin rips into money. If you don't have it, you'll do everything to get it. If you have it, life is easy and swell. This, though, is a weakness in the booklet. Capitalist society appears as a mass collection of commodities, to quote Marx (after all), where one – the money commodity – allows the exchange of all commodities because it is regarded as a universal equivalent. To attack capitalism, you must see it as a social relationship based on minority ownership, with majority exploitation: profits, rent and interest for the few; wage slavery for the rest. A class system with a class struggle.

I am certain people will enjoy this booklet: for one thing it shows workers are able to develop revolutionary ideas without a Leninist Party.

G.T.

Changing Lives: 200 Years of People and Protest in Sheffield



In 1795 local militia fired on a crowd in Sheffield, killing two people and injuring many others: this is the earliest example mentioned in an exhibition at the city's Weston Park Museum. In 1819 fifty thousand attended a meeting to show solidarity with the victims of the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester, while in 1840 Samuel Holberry attempted to organise a Chartist uprising in Sheffield, but he was betrayed to the authorities and imprisoned; a bust of him is displayed.

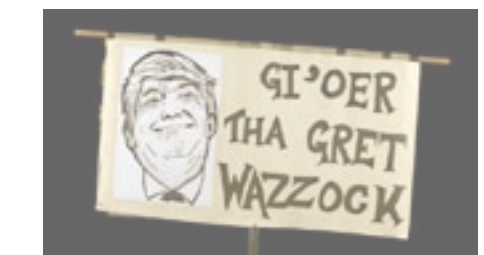
And so the protests and struggles continued, from the Sheffield Women's Suffrage Society (formed 1882) to the gay-rights campaigning of local resident Edward Carpenter. In the last century Sheffield and surrounding areas played an important role in the fight for access to the countryside; G.H.B. Ward, one

of the main organisers, referred to the 'gentle art of trespassing'. The miners' strike of the 1980s naturally gets a lot of attention, but so does a less well-known but even longer-lasting strike, at the Keeton engineering firm from 1986 to 1994 (38 workers were sacked after a secret strike ballot).

More recent protests covered here include current campaigns against the council's tree-felling policy, and anti-Trump posters, one of which announces, 'Gi 'Oer Tha Gret Wazzock' (wazzock is a dialect term with a pejorative meaning).

At the Millennium Gallery in Sheffield city centre is an exhibition 'Hope Is Strong', which is claimed to explore 'the power of art to question the world we live in'. Sean Scully's 'Ghost' is a painting of the US flag, with the stars replaced by a gun. The most powerful piece here is Jeremy Deller's installation 'The Battle of Orgreave', dealing with the most notorious confrontation of the miners' strike, and making it quite clear how the government had it in for the miners and their union.

PB



50 Years Ago

How Close was France to a Socialist Revolution?

One of the most amusing reports to come out of France during the recent unrest was of one panic-stricken capitalist, convinced that his class was about to be expropriated, who loaded his car with over £1 million in cash and made a dash for the Swiss border. But his terror, ridiculous in retrospect, was matched by a corresponding euphoria in left-wing circles. Anyone accustomed to thinking along Bolshevik or anarchist lines was convinced that “a revolutionary situation” had developed and, in Britain at any rate, there were several groups declaring that the socialist revolution had started. Already May 1968 is part of the mythology of the left and there is a generally accepted explanation of why the agitation seeped away and why the strikers drifted back to work. The French workers are supposed to have been ripe for revolution and all that was missing was “a large revolutionary organisation capable of giving direction to the demands of the working class”.

This raises the whole question of what constitutes a socialist revolution. The Socialist Party of Great Britain argues that it is not enough to have thousands of demonstrators on the streets or even millions of workers occupying the factories. Above all the working class must have a clear understanding of what Socialism entails and what methods are effective in overthrowing capitalism. A grasp of socialist principles by the vast majority of the workers is a minimal condition for going forward to Socialism and no party, no matter how religiously it follows the Bolshevik tradition, can substitute for this. If this is accepted, then we can estimate how close France came to a socialist revolution by taking a look at the demands which the workers advanced during the period of upheaval. Most prominent were the usual claims for higher wages, better working conditions, shorter hours and security of employment. (There are between two and three million workers on the minimum wage level of less than £8 a week and at least four million earning under £11 a week.) Such demands have the full support of the Socialist Party—but we must emphasise that there is nothing revolutionary about them. (*Socialist Standard*, July 1968)



Capitalism is a society of inequalities, in how both wealth and power are distributed. These inequalities have often affected women more adversely than men, and campaigns for women’s rights have been ongoing for over a century. But the debate around gender equality is no longer just about differences in wages or opportunities. Allegations of sexual harassment and abuse in Parliament and the entertainment industry especially have highlighted how some men have exercised their power. Also, the debate has broadened due to increased awareness of issues affecting transgender people, many of whom have felt marginalised.

How should socialists respond to the new prominence given to gender politics? What does gender inequality tell us about capitalist society, especially how it shapes gender roles? And how does the issue impact upon revolutionary politics? The Socialist Party argues that sexism and misogyny are expressions of how capitalism is inherently divisive and unequal. So, the



solution is to address these problems at their source, by uniting to replace capitalism with a society based on equality and freedom.

Our weekend of talks and discussion will examine how gender issues relate to wider society and to revolutionary politics. Full residential cost (including accommodation and

meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £100. The concessionary rate is £50. Day visitors are welcome, but please book in advance.

E-mail enquiries should be sent to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk. To book a place online, go to spgb.net/summerschool2018, or send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) with your contact details to Summer School, The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.

Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

JULY 2018

LONDON

KENTISH TOWN
Thursday 19 July, 8.00 p.m.
“Gender and Power”
An informal discussion led by Carla Dee
Venue: Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Avenue, London, NW5 2RX

HAMMERSMITH
Saturday 21 July, 2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.
Public meeting Speaker and subject: Should We Join the Labour Party to Transform it? Discussion opened by guest speaker Yehudi Webster
Venue: Quaker Meeting House,

20 Nigel Playfair Avenue, London W6 9JY

AUGUST 2018

BIRMINGHAM
Friday 3 August, 5.00 p.m. – Sunday 5 August, 2.00 p.m.
Summer School – “Gender and Power”
Venue: Fircroft College of Adult Education, 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6LH

LONDON
Bank Holiday Monday 27 August
Carshalton Environment Fair
The Socialist Party will have a stall 10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Venue: Carshalton Park, Ruskin Road, Carshalton, SM5 3DD



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Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation

of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Koch & Co.

Socialists have long said that political parties of the left, right and centre exist to preserve the status quo. 'The Republican and Democratic parties ... are the political wings of the capitalist system and such differences as arise between them relate to spoils and not to principle. With either of these parties in power one thing is always certain and that is that the capitalist class is in the saddle and the working class under the saddle ... The ignorant workingman who supports either of these parties forges his own fetters and is the unconscious author of his own misery' (Eugene Debs, 1904). Recent evidence supports this view. Capitalist Shri Thanedar is in the race for governor of Michigan. Differences in policy between the two main parties are of little concern to him and apparently his decision to run under the banner of pseudo-socialist Bernie Sanders is based purely on advice that Independents and Republicans are less likely to win. And, 'the political arm of the Koch network, long reputed for championing conservative causes and politicians, has launched an ad campaign thanking a Democratic Senator up for re-election in a red state for her work in passing a financial deregulation bill' (time.com, 4 June). The brothers are actively opposed to Trump's tariffs and other issues of concern to capitalists.

true for supporters of state capitalism) and José, unsurprisingly, adds Cuba and North Korea for good measure before insisting that price controls are an essential feature of 'socialism'. He then delivers what he clearly thinks is his coup de grâce: 'For those that remain skeptical about Venezuela's socialist status, they can look no further than the second section of the Communist Manifesto, "Proletarians and Communists," to understand the government's true nature. Marx sums up the socialist program with ten essential tenets.' The measures ranging from nationalisation to a heavy progressive or graduated income tax may have had merit in 1848 but not today. Indeed, Marx and

author, former professor at Princeton University, activist and ordained Presbyterian minister, has given talks on Red Rosa – although even viewing the YouTube videos after reading a recent essay of his titled *Teaching 'Les Misérables' in Prison* (truthdig.com, 27 May) may leave you in doubt. Hedges writes in his introduction: 'the socialist [sic!] British Prime Minister Lloyd George said "Les Misérables" taught him more about poverty and the human condition than anything else he had ever read and instilled in him a lifelong ambition "to alleviate the distress and the suffering of the poor."' There follows a reasonable summary of the book and comments from some inmates, but no call for a world without the prison industry, no mention that the 99 percent worldwide remain in chains: 'earning a wage is a prison occupation' - D H Lawrence, or acknowledgement that 'the paradise of the rich is made out of the hell of the poor' – Victor Hugo.



No leaders, no led

'I am not a Labor Leader; I do not want you to follow me or anyone else; if you are looking for a Moses to lead you out of this capitalist wilderness, you will stay right where you are. I would not lead you into the promised land if I could, because if I led you in, some one else would lead you out. You must use your heads as well as your hands, and get yourself out of your present condition;

as it is now the capitalists use your heads and your hands' (Debs, pre-1908).

Dumb & Dumber

The comedian John Oliver has been taken to task in a recent article (businessinsider.com, 3 June) by José Niño of the Mises Institute. Both agree that 'socialist' countries exist, but the advocate of a dystopia known as free market capitalism objects to remarks made by Oliver on his TV show such as there are 'plenty of socialist [sic] countries that look nothing like Venezuela'. This country has long been the bête noire of the Institute and other right-wing groups (with the opposite being

Engels in their joint preface to the 1872 edition state: 'No special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section II. That passage would, in many respects, be differently worded today.' Besides, as Rosa Luxemburg said succinctly: 'without the conscious will and action of the majority of the proletariat, there can be no Socialism.'

More huff and puff from Hedges

Chris Hedges, the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, *New York Times* best selling

